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## THE FRENCH RIVIERA.

BY PROFESSOR WILLIAM GARDEN BLAIKIE, D. D., LL. D.

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THE Riviera or southern sea coast of France, extending along the shore of Provence, from Hyères to Monte Carlo and Mentone, a distance of nearly a hundred miles, is a most charming region of the earth, increasing every year in interest and attractive power. Year by year all who can afford it like to spend the winter where there is no winter; where roses are as abundant at Christmas as they are in other parts at mid-summer, and where the sky for many days in succession is one speckless vault of blue, often showing those soft and tender tints which in colder latitudes confine themselves to mid-summer evenings. It is in some respects like Southern California or Florida, but it differs from them in this, that it has two histories—one very old, the other quite new. Lying in the highway between Italy and France, it attracted from the earliest times the warrior, the trader and the settler; and a few monuments, mostly ruins, remain to this day to recall the times of Greeks and Romans, Ligurians and Saracens. But it is the modern history that interests the world to-day. In the making of that history, it is not the French but the English race that has had the leading share.

A hundred years ago, when Tobias Smollett, the novelist and historian, was British Consul at Nice, he was struck with the mildness of the climate, and from his days Nice has been a resort for delicate persons, especially those of consumptive tendency, and for all who have desired a milder winter than usually greeted them at home. Among those who made for Nice, somewhere about the year 1832, was Henry, Lord Brougham, the great champion of the people in the days of the Reform Bill. The story goes that, that being the time of the great cholera scare, his lordship

was informed, when approaching Nice, that he must undergo a personal fumigation with sulphur, before he would be allowed to enter the city. This was too much for the high-minded Chancellor of England. "Let's stay where we are," was his remark to a friend who accompanied him, and stay they did. The place bore the name of Cannes, so called from the luxuriant growth of reeds or canes all about. It was charmingly situated in the bend of a beautiful bay, with an amphitheatre of wooded hills around, the little old town, surmounted by its tower, clinging gracefully to Mount Chevalier on the west, and in the horizon the jagged range of the Esterel Mountains forming a splendid screen for the setting sun. Lord Brougham purchased a beautiful piece of land on the western suburb of the town, erecting a villa, which he called the Chateau Eleanore, in memory of his only child. It was not long before he attracted neighbors of mark to the beautiful situation, foreigners with high sounding titles, like the Duke of Rochefoucault and the Duke of Vallombrosa, as well as countrymen of his own, titled and untitled.

But in the more recent extension of the town, preference has been shown for the eastern suburbs. The name "*Californie*" has been given to this region, from its resemblance to the American State, of which the palm, the vine, the orange tree, the pepper tree and the eucalyptus forcibly remind us. Here, or in this neighborhood, are several of the villas that of late years have created most interest. Among these are the Villa Nevada, where Prince Leopold, Duke of Albany, Queen Victoria's youngest son, died in 1884; the Villa Edelweis, which the Queen herself occupied in 1887, and the Chateau Thorene, the property of Lord Rendel, whose guest Mr. Gladstone was for a considerable part of the winter before his death. The Nevada and the Edelweis are not of the highest class; the Thorene has much higher claims. It is one of the finest villas in the place, and the grounds surrounding it are large and magnificent. It is situated, like many more of the best villas, a considerable way up among the hills, commanding one of the finest views possible, both of sea and land. Mr. Gladstone could hardly have had a finer situation, or one where he could more fully enjoy the bracing influence of the place.

A few miles to the east of Nice, is a small territory which of late years has attained an undesirable fame, the little principality of Monaco, in which the famous gambling resort of Monte Carlo

is situated. Monaco, though probably the smallest independent state in Europe, has a very old history, having for many centuries been ruled by the family of Grimaldi; but its present pre-eminence is quite of recent date. It is not a pleasant reflection that when the pernicious habit of public gambling had been brought to an end at Baden-Baden and other places where it had been long carried on, but had become a public nuisance, it found a refuge in the little territory of the Prince of Monaco.

A more beautiful spot than Monte Carlo could hardly be conceived. From its spacious Casino on its commanding height, surrounded by gardens and villas embosomed in palms and glowing in the sunshine, you look out on the bay in its exquisite blue, surmounted by the blue sky above, peacefully laving the jagged rocks that run into its bosom, and with its brilliant color forming a fine contrast to the dark promontories that fling themselves out in the distance. It is the very ideal of peace and purity, and it is hard to believe that it is the resort of idlers and gamblers, prostitutes and desperadoes, not a few of whom end their unblest career by suicide. Yet the place has a great air of respectability; magnificent hotels, unrivalled concerts, fashionable balls, Parisian shops, exquisite gardens attract many of whom it were not fair to say that they are vicious. All the same, it is the curse of the Riviera; nor does there seem any near prospect of its coming to an end; agreements extending to long periods between the Prince and his lessees produce such revenues to the one and such profits to the other, that, until greed ceases to rule human nature, or until some political convulsion violently changes the order of things, this moral nuisance seems likely to flourish.

Another few miles to the east is Mentone. In common parlance, it bears the Italian name we have given it, but in all official documents it is spelled in the French form, Menton. It is only within the last forty years that Mentone, Nice and the main part of the coast of Provence have belonged to France. Mentone has decidedly an Italian cast; the tradesmen's names on the sign posts are Italian, and, indeed, the Italian boundary is but a mile from the town, with its custom house officers to stop your carriage, if you are taking a drive, and to ascertain that you are carrying no cargo of tobacco.

The discovery of Mentone as a health resort is ascribed to an English physician, a Dr. Bennett, to whose memory a statue

has been erected in the town. It is probably the warmest and most sheltered of all the towns in the Riviera. The magnificent hills approach much nearer than in the case of Nice or of Cannes; in summer weather the atmosphere must be close, and but for the sea breeze it would be stifling. Perhaps more has been done for Mentone by Mr. Spurgeon than by Dr. Bennett. For many years he went to it for a winter holiday, and body and mind alike found refreshment and renovation in its sunshine and its scenery. It is wonderful how many persons, even in distant parts of the globe, are attracted to a place which is known to be dear to some man of mark. Many a tourist from the United States bent his steps to Mentone because Mr. Spurgeon was there. Alas! even its magic atmosphere could not avail to arrest the hand of disease when it had taken the firm grip it had got of Mr. Spurgeon. He died in the Beau Rivage Hotel, opposite the Eastern Bay, his windows looking out on the blue Mediterranean, and on the bright canopy above, so true an emblem of the peace and the beauty of Heaven.

Across the Italian boundary, we have more health resorts of the same character, particularly Bordighera and San Remo. Bordighera has become famous as the winter residence of George MacDonald. Many have been attracted to it by the famous writer, who has not only created such an interest in his books, but an equal interest in the man that wrote them. Those of us who knew him in the days when his locks were black, his eye bright and his face full of life and joy, must be painfully struck by the marks of decay that are now but too apparent. But MacDonald was always a delicate man, and we may be very sure that but for Bordighera, winter would long ere now have proved too much for him. It is something surely that one who had to give up the ministry in early life through severe attacks of hemorrhage has reached his seventy-fifth year, and is still able to work. We do not agree with all his theological opinions, but we honor the writer who has striven so hard on a Christian basis to spread among his fellows the spirit of love and joy.

But we did not mean to cross the Italian boundary, for our subject is the French Riviera. We have noticed some of the principal resorts in Provence; but we have no idea that they have reached their limit. Our expectation rather is that from time to time new places will be added, until the whole border of Provence is studded

with health resorts. Very recently Hyères has been attached. And more are in the course of formation. When we visited San Raphael, between Cannes and Hyères, we found the process in operation with which Americans are familiar, when a new town is in the course of being laid out—a railway station, of course, streets and roads graded and named, but as yet with hardly a house; villas here and there, designed to show what nicely situated residences might be had; the site marked for an “Anglican church;” in short, the very features that thirty years before one could have seen when Cannes was in its infancy. In the same neighborhood, but inland, is Valescure, where a Grand Hotel rears its massive form as a signal to ordinary homes to gather round it. We learned that Lord Rendel and other rich men have acquired land in that neighborhood for the purpose of forming an inland health settlement. Much has been done by syndicates in such undertakings, often, doubtless, with benefit to themselves as well as to the public, but sometimes with heavy loss. These are not the times when hopeful enterprises can find no capitalists to back them; the means are seldom wanting even when the chance of success is but small. “*Situations del’avenir*” are made much of.

And now the question naturally arises: What are the conditions of this strip of Provençal coast that make it so attractive to seekers after health? What enables it to turn “the winter of our discontent” in other parts into “glorious summer?” In the first place, the chain of the “Alpes Maritimes,” which run parallel to the coast, protects it from the fierce winds of the north, and, moreover, forms a kind of mirror for catching the sun’s rays, which are also reflected from the surface of the sea, and thrown, as it were, on the neighboring shores. As long as the sun shines all is bright and warm, but immediately after sunset the air rapidly cools, and within half an hour the genial warmth of the sunshine is converted into sharp cold. Warnings have to be constantly given to invalids to be on their guard against this hour. If they have been at all heated by the sunshine, the evening cold is apt to produce a chill, from which disastrous results may flow.

North of the Maritime Alps, Provence is cold and dry; it is only the southern border that has the semi-tropical climate. The wind known as the mistral (a contraction of magistral, the “domineering” wind) is called “the scourge of Provence”; sometimes even the Riviera gets a taste of its quality. But it makes the at-

mosphere for the most part very dry and clear; hence the beautiful sky. A well known scientific writer on the Riviera, M. Charles Lenthéric has an interesting theory, that opposite coasts of the same sea usually show a remarkable resemblance to each other, both in flora and in climate. He finds a correspondence in these respects between the south of France and the north of Africa. But the resemblance does not extend beyond the Riviera.

It is not to be supposed, however, that in this winter climate we have nothing but blue skies and bright sunshine. If it were so, the country would be a desert. And, of course, winters vary in the degree of occasional frost, and in the amount of the rainfall. The winter of last year was remarkably open; the frost but slight; snow unknown except on the tops of the mountains; rainy days but a small percentage of those of bright sunshine, and the mistral fairly well behaved. In fact, it was difficult during the winter months to realize that it was not July. The illusion is the greater that the hills for the most part are covered with green. The native trees, conspicuous among which are the olive, the umbrella pine, and the cork tree, retain their foliage throughout. And those which have been imported, the eucalyptus, the palm, the pepper tree, the bamboo, and others show a still richer green. January has hardly arrived when the buds of the mimosa begin to swell, and by the end of the month every grove in the neighborhood of Cannes is a blaze of yellow gold. And in the grounds of villas and chateaux the flowering shrubs are hardly less beautiful. Camelias may be seen, a mass of flowers. The golden apples of the orange show beautifully in the setting of its bright green leaves. And as for flowers, it is impossible to convey an idea of their abundance and luxuriance. Visit the flower market of Cannes or of Nice, and you are dazzled by the profusion of daffodils and jonquils, of roses and carnations, of mignonette and violets, primulas and pansies, cineraria and heliotrope, anemonies, white, crimson and purple—all grown in the open air. In some situations, cactus and acacia are in full blaze, and in choice gardens, like that of Mr. Hanbury, near Mentone, the living aloe may be seen, rearing its mighty stem in preparation for its display, and the dead aloe, exhausted by the flowers of last season, which are still seen clinging in a withered state to its dead stem. Of late years there has sprung up a new industry, connected with the trade in flowers. The post office gives facilities

for their transmission, and every day a profusion of little boxes is sent by visitors to their friends at home, and larger cargoes are sent to flower dealers in Paris, London, Berlin and other distant places.

We have said that it is the modern history of the Riviera that gives it its great interest to-day; but it is likewise interesting to think that, hundreds of years before Christ, human eyes looked on the blue sky and the blue sea as they do now; saw the sun in all its magnificent drapery, set behind the Esterel Mountains; saw the crimson zone encircle the horizon for three-fourths of its extent, as we see it sometimes now; and that there men breathed in winter a more genial air than in most parts even of Italy or Greece. The very name of Nice points to the early occupation of the Greeks, for what is it but the modern form of Niké, "victory"—a commemoration of a victory gained over the early Ligurian inhabitants. So Antibes, which stands on a promontory over against Nice, is a popular contraction of Antipolis, "the opposite city." Monaco, supposed to have been dedicated to Hercules, was his Monos Oikos, "only house," no unsuitable term for a temple on a narrow rocky promontory, two hundred feet above the level of the sea. The Romans likewise left diverse names; for the very word Provence is the Latin *provincia*. Fréjus is the modern equivalent of Forum Julii, after Julius Cæsar. At Fréjus there is an amphitheatre, of which the walls are in good preservation, that afforded accommodation, it is believed, for nine thousand spectators; some of the corridors and doors still remain, by which the wild beasts were let in on the Christian martyrs and other offenders, amid the jubulations of the assembled thousands. There are also the remains of a handsome aqueduct, by which water was brought from the hills. Fréjus is now a poor, dilapidated village; in those days it had a good harbor (rendered useless by the receding of the seacoast), and it must have had a thriving trade and a large population. There are the remains of another amphitheatre at Cimiez, near Nice, easily known to be Roman by the small square stones which the Romans always used, but it is of smaller dimensions than the one at Fréjus.

Coming to early Christian times, the most interesting of all places on the Riviera are the two islands called "the Lérins." Their present names are St. Marguerite and St. Honorat, but of old they were called Lero and Lerina, or the big and the little Lero. They



are mere morsels of islands, the larger containing some 400 acres, the smaller about 100. To a Scotsman they recall two little islands in the Frith of Clyde—the two Cumbræ; and a well known prayer ascribed to a Highland minister, who used to ask God to bless “the Muckle Cumbræ and the Little Cumbræ, and the adjawcent islands of Great Britain and Ireland.” The island St. Marguerite is famed for a legend of a prisoner called “the man in the iron mask,” in the time of Louis XIV., an unknown person of note, who wore, not *an iron* mask, as the legend has it, but a *velvet* mask—was never seen by any one but his jailor, and after being confined for ten years in the castle of the island, was transferred to the Bastille, where he died. The smaller island has sometimes been called the Iona of France, and the work done from it has been compared to that of Columba and his brethren from the island of Iona. This may be something of an exaggeration, for the Monastery of Lerins did not engage in the far-spreading missionary labors that made Iona famous. But in its way, and chiefly as an educational institute, it was not only one of the most famous of French monasteries, but one of the most efficient in advancing the cause of Christianity in pagan times.

But the middle ages have likewise furnished us with interesting memorials in the Riviera of their turbulent history. A few miles inland, we meet with little towns built on the tops of hills that to our notions are the very last places where it is desirable to dwell. Such is the little town of Mougins, near Cannes, but more striking examples are to be seen near Mentone and beyond the Italian border. Nothing but necessity could have driven people to these all but inaccessible heights. But between the invasions of pirates by sea and Saracens by land, they had very hard times, for these enemies were as remorseless as death, and spared neither man, woman, nor child. The heights where their forefathers were compelled by necessity to make their homes, habit and possession have continued as the abodes of the present inhabitants. Such towns as Gorbis, Castellar, Gourdon, Dolceacqua and Isolabona seem altogether out of place in the end of the nineteenth century. Perched on heights many hundred feet above the level of the sea, the mere carriage of the necessities of life to them involves an expenditure of human toil that would seem to leave little if any strength available for other purposes. Within recent years excellent roads have been made to them, or near to them, roads imply-

ing remarkable ingenuity of engineering, and reducing the gradients to the lowest possible figure; but even yet, in the case of some of the places, you may see women toiling up footpaths with their washing on their heads, or men with loads of wood, and even children getting their first lessons in the art of carrying heavy burdens up hill. It seems so strange that when in our cities we have contrived by means of lifts or elevators to save strong men and women the trouble of carrying their own bodies a few feet upwards, we should find the natives of these distant places carrying heavy burdens up heights the very thought of which would appal the modern Englishman or American.

And what sort of places are they when you reach them? Not at all inviting or interesting. For the most part dilapidated, and always untidy, as if the people were too poor to be able, or too tasteless to care, to make them look nice. Generally the people are owners of vineyards or gardens below, yielding them a poor living. And all their care seems to be needed to keep these in order. For on the sides of mountains you can only have vineyards by elaborate terracing, and the many tiers of walls you see, representing the labor of centuries, demand unceasing care in order to support a level patch no larger than an ordinary room. Much of the living of the people used to be derived from the olive, but the oil of the olive has found a serious rival in the mineral oils now so abundant, and besides, the olive itself is not always to be depended on, the olive crop having recently proved a failure.

But some of the valleys through which you approach these high places are exquisite, and the views from the heights transcendent. The plantations of olive are often very fine. Most persons are disappointed with the olive on first acquaintance, and wonder what there is in its dull color and gnarled trunk to make men speak of "the beauty of the olive." But one's opinion changes when one sees it in a congenial valley, covering great ranges, its mild color contrasting pleasantly with the bright blue of the sky, and its richly clad branches and drooping leaves reminding us somewhat of the hanging glory of the birch—a tree, by the way, which we never see in those parts. Vineyards are not pretty, especially in winter; but where the mountains tower to a great height the vineyards become insignificant, and the eye is filled with the vast masses that shoot their jagged tops into the sky. And when these are seen in the light of the setting sun, which seems as if it came

through a diamond lens, the effect is overpowering. You get a wonderful revelation of the transfiguring power of light.

Vineyards, however, do not take up all the arable soil. Of course, there are patches of grass, wheat and vegetables, and there are orange groves and flower gardens. Near Grasse, a little town to the north of Cannes, you find rose gardens in great abundance. Grasse is renowned as the great centre of the perfumery business. It contains about seventy perfume distilleries. It is said to possess a monopoly in France, perhaps in the world, for the production of perfumes and other products of fruit and flowers. Germany, Russia, and, above all, America, send immense orders. The perfume industry is an interesting one and gives much employment to young and old; but there are persons whose nerves cannot stand the strong scent, whether of the orange or of the rose. It is an odd sight, when the orange blossoms are gathered, to see men and women perched, like so many monkeys, on the branches of the trees.

Hitherto, the benefits of the Riviera as a health resort, or as a means of escaping the sharpness of winter, have been confined to the upper classes and a few of the middle. It has been a great favorite with the royal family of Great Britain. Queen Victoria has spent winter months at Cannes, Grasse, Mentone and Nice. For those of moderate means comfortable quarters may be found in pensions and hotels that board strangers at the rate of about two dollars a day. Even for a poorer class there is a limited provision. The *Asyle Evangelique* at Cannes, the Villa Helvetia at Mentone for governesses and other young ladies in poor health, and the English Hospital at Nice provide the means of enjoying the climate of the Riviera for a few of the numberless cases where, if it were within their reach, benefit might probably be derived from it. Whether these benefits shall ever be enjoyed on a larger scale seems doubtful, unless we should come to know a far wider development of the spirit of unselfish beneficence than our world has hitherto seen.

W. GARDEN BLAIR.